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PUBLICATIONS

News Notes

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HARVEST FROM KANSAS

Enclosed is your copy of "The Harvest."--the 1945 annual report of the Kansas Extension Service. It is coming to you through the cooperation of Lisle Longsdorf, Kansas extension editor.

We'd like to congratulate Lisle and his associates on the general attractiveness of the publication and on their rather brief presentation of extension high lights. One of the outstanding things about this publication is its use of good, big cuts. As the Chinese might say, a big cut is worth 10,000 little cuts. The pictures are well reproduced. The page heads are good: "Men and Plows," "Women and Homes," etc. We like the idea of the statistical summary of extension work on the back of the back cover. But instead of using and explaining "Contacts," how about saying "Number of People Reached"?

On the debit side we'd list the shade of blue ink--it gives a washed-out appearance. Also, our eyes aren't as young as they used to be--so, how about larger type, especially for such long lines. The series of dots sprinkled through the text on page 3 give a choppy effect and bother us. How do you like the side heads? We think they don't show up too well against the light blue background. Centered or side heads within the text boundaries would have the advantage of breaking up the somewhat solid-looking reading matter.

Mrs. Amy Cowing, of the Division of Field Studies and Training, reports that the estimated readability of the text, according to the Flesch formula, averages "difficult" or college level. Five samples proved to be college graduate level, and seven are high school level. One of her suggestions is to change the verbal nouns back to verbs, "populate" the bulletin with a few people, and have these "people" as the subject of these verbs.

INTERSTATE BULLETIN

The Extension Services of the six New England States, New Jersey, and Delaware are helping their farmers prepare for the ides of March by giving them copies of the new interstate extension bulletin "Farmers and 1946 Income Taxes."

The bulletin was prepared by the agricultural economics departments of the New England State agricultural colleges in cooperation with the Extension Service and Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA. J. L. Tennant, head of the department

of agricultural economics, Rhode Island State College, tells us that the pooled orders total 40,000 copies or more. This is the second annual bulletin on this subject published cooperatively in the Northeast. Samples tested by the Flesch formula range from an estimated 7th grade level to college reading.

MORE INTERSTATE COOPERATION

R. D. Michael, Virginia extension editor, sent us several copies of Virginia's new Extension Bulletin 51, "Poultry Production" (4-H Club Series). In it he has used two of Nebraska's full-color cuts contrasting the good layer and the poor layer. These are among the color cuts which Elton Lux, Nebraska's extension supervisor of subject-matter materials, offered to extension editors in other States in the form of electros.

From Washington (STATE), comes a bulletin on ironing a shirt which is a reprint of Cornell Bulletin for Homemakers 629, "A Simple Way To Iron a Shirt," by Elaine Knowles.

STUDY OF FARMERS' INFORMATION SOURCES

How does the farmer get useful information? The Research Interpretation Council of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute is trying to answer this question as far as Alabama is concerned. The council has developed a field study suggested at the extension publications improvement workshop, held in Auburn, Ala., in September. Students of agriculture in selected high schools have been making the interviews.

ANNUAL REPORTS ON THE CARPET

Sometimes we can get good publications ideas from business and industry--sometimes they probably could get good ideas from extension publications.

A while back, in her column in the New York Post, Sylvia F. Porter reported on her examination of 3,000 annual reports of various industries. She decided that "vast numbers of American corporations . . . are shockingly deficient in plain, common-sense public relations."

Among Miss Porter's criticisms:

"A simple sentence horrifies some industrialists, apparently. They could say it short and sweet--'last year we earned a million' and 'this year we're making hairpins instead of tanks.' But no--they must put in so many long words that the first reaction of the person receiving the report is to walk to the nearest waste-basket.

"They could brighten up the tale with pertinent pictures and understandable charts. But no--they must repel the readers with pages of small type and endless rows of statistics, statistics, statistics.

"They could sit down and figure out for themselves the futility of mailing out an accountant's masterpiece to the average citizen. But no--the aim actually seems to be the duller, the better."

How does your annual report score on these points?

Joachim Silbermann seems to be in agreement with Miss Porter that many corporation annual reports fail to be of much use from the public relations standpoint. A reproduction of his article, "The Annual Report--An Effective Public Relations Document," is going to you herewith. Many of his suggestions apply to extension annual reports. With adaptation, still others would be useful. We reproduced Mr. Silbermann's article with the permission of the publishers of The Public Relations Journal, in which it appeared.

PROCESS MAKES PERFECT

Of, by, and for local farm people--that's the way we'd describe "The Soil Saver," issued for the farmers of the Thomas Jefferson Soil Conservation District, in Virginia. Through the kindness of Margaret Snyder, of the Extension Division, University of Virginia, we're enclosing a copy of the November issue for you to look over. Director Wilson expects to send your director a copy of the September issue.

Here's what Miss Snyder has to say about this monthly folder: "It is part of an experiment in resource-use education. . . . We here have undertaken to see what we can find out about ways to translate ordinary research materials into forms that are more widely useful to those people who lack the training to use the standard reports on research. The local soil conservation district . . . asked us to work with them in doing a series of bulletins designed particularly to appeal to the so-called 'lower half' of the district's farmers, and we welcomed the opportunity to work in such direct cooperation with an agency close to the mass of the people--if farmers can ever be thought of as a 'mass'! . . .

"In the first place, we work in the closest possible collaboration with local technicians and farmers. The committee for the district includes T. O. Scott, the county agent for Albemarle County, one 'dirt-farmer' member of the board of supervisors of the Thomas Jefferson Soil Conservation District, and John A. Smart, chief conservationist of the district. A variety of other local people, including a considerable number of actual, practicing farmers, have been called in at various times. We have felt that the bulletins should not only be sound from the technical viewpoint but should be written as far as possible in the language of the particular farmers to whom they are addressed.

"The writing itself has been a genuinely cooperative process. When the committee . . . has decided on a topic and given me material to draw upon, I write a draft and take it back to the committee. There we rework it, literally word by word. Often this is done not once but two or three times. The one on "Do You Know Your Soils?" involved at least half a dozen such conferences and the . . . one, 'Can You Afford To Farm the Conservation Way?' took Mr. Smart and the county technicians and me to visit each of the five farmers reported on. I have tried in the writing to use just as much of the individual phrasing of the farmers involved as possible. We feel that if new and unfamiliar ideas are presented in words and sentences that make familiar sense, the new ideas have a much better chance of being understood and accepted. And although we have found no way of measuring the exact results, there seems to be some reason for thinking that a fair number of people are reading the little yellow sheets . . . "

The Division of Field Studies and Training reports that, according to the Flesch formula, all 11 issues analyzed have an estimated readability of 6th grade level. In fact, no sample proved more difficult than 7th grade level, and some were 5th grade.

The fact that this publication is such easy reading means that it is well adapted to reaching the district's farmers. Miss Snyder reports that 10 percent of the farm people have no formal schooling, and only about 20 percent have gone as far as 7th and 8th grade.

The American Bankers' Association sent a sample copy of "The Soil Saver" to each of their county key bankers throughout the country. Miss Snyder comments, ". . . we are glad to send out samples, but have written each one that we do not recommend simple duplication of our copy; we have tried to give them some little idea of what we mean by saying that the process is fully as important as the product . . ."

